

# PASO PACÍFICO

YOU MADE CONNECTIONS FOR CONSERVATION!





Dear Friend,

In these dynamic times, I often ask, “What week is it, again?” But your heartfelt support is something I can’t forget. **Your gifts saved endangered wildlife and strengthened communities in need during some very strenuous months. Thank you!**

When the closure of tourism meant a loss of income to many families, you sent food aid to the neediest in communities in Central America.

Although COVID-19 increased wildlife poaching, you strengthened ranger patrols so that endangered baby spider monkeys stayed safe this spring.

Because you gave, young Junior Rangers learned about their natural world throughout lockdowns, and got to contribute to nature by cleaning up local waterways, cultivating school gardens, and releasing baby sea turtles into the ocean.

In this newsletter, you get to learn about the differences you made for sea turtles. May your spirits rise as you see your impact! You reminded me that when times get tough, we can get through them—together.

In gratitude,

Sarah M. Otterstrom, Ph.D.  
Founder & Executive Director



## WHERE YOU WORKED

### PLAYA BRASILÓN



**Thanks to you, endangered black sea turtles were born at Playa Brasilón this spring!**

Black turtles are a subspecies of green sea turtle. Playa Brasilón is their largest known nesting beach in Nicaragua and is one of the most important black turtle beaches in Central America. More sea turtle species, such as the critically endangered hawksbill, also nest here.

This beach is accessible only via boat or rugged hike, but turtle egg poachers visit often. However, you kept rangers there around the clock to protect these precious sea turtles and their nests. Thank you.



## FROM THE FIELD TO YOU



### **Osmar Sandino**

Marine Science Coordinator

Osmar directs our marine conservation program. He has a master's degree in biology from the National Autonomous University of Mexico. As an undergraduate, he participated in research that recorded 42 species of echinoderms (starfish, sea cucumbers, and other marine invertebrates) for the very first time in Nicaraguan waters.

Have you ever seen a baby sea turtle? To see one is to fall in love with it! They are precious, from their oversized, ocean-seeking eyes to their little flippers that are so ready to paddle in the sea. Each week, I see baby turtles that get to live and dive into the Pacific Ocean because of *your* protection.

During the last eighteen months, while over 3700 baby turtles incubated and hatched under your aegis, I grew into my new role as a marine biologist for Paso Pacifico. I am very fortunate that you gave me this opportunity.

### **You Developed My Passion**

My journey began ten years ago. When I was an undergraduate biology student, I attended a Paso Pacifico-led field course. During those unforgettable two weeks, I learned to see beyond basic biology and consider how people and nature can work together. To longtime donors, especially, I thank you for opening the door to my awakening.

Afterward, I volunteered for conservation efforts around Nicaragua. For example, I monitored coral reefs with Paso Pacifico. Your support made that happen. Those times helped me find my passion: to study and protect the ocean and its biological riches.

Career opportunities in science are relatively rare in my country. Once I earned a master's degree, your gifts gave me the chance to rejoin the Paso Pacifico team in January 2020. I have been thrilled and grateful to coordinate the marine science efforts you supported, which studied and saved members of critical species like hawksbill, green (black), olive ridley, and leatherback sea turtles.

### **You Saved Endangered Sea Turtles from Poachers**

This past year intensified threats to sea turtles. COVID-19 paralyzed the tourism industry. Many jobs around me were lost. In response, many people traveled to



the beaches at night to take turtle eggs. Protecting the turtles against so many determined poachers was overwhelming, but you met the challenge.

You not only sent food aid to the communities, but you kept the turtle rangers on key beaches that host the highest numbers of highly endangered sea turtles, like hawksbills (above). Without you, these turtles' nests and our ranger stations would have been lost. Protection efforts may never have been able to return. **But you assisted people in need and protected sea turtles around the clock.**

You also saved baby turtles by bolstering two turtle egg hatcheries. Hatcheries (above) are enclosed shelters where poachers can take turtle nests and receive incentive payments. Women rangers (see facing page), supported by you, can then protect the eggs and shepherd the hatched baby turtles from the sand to the sea. Your donations refreshed our main hatchery and rebuilt a second one that badly needed it. Poachers started bringing turtle eggs to us instead of to the black market. **You saved each endangered turtle egg the poachers brought in.**

## DONORS LIKE YOU



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## CHARLIE & HIS FRIENDS

**A boy from Connecticut will inspire you!** Charlie Beers saved sea turtles by learning about a problem, setting an ambitious goal, and asking friends to help. Using our online donation page, he and his parents crowdfunded for our fake turtle eggs. Called InvestEGGators, these eggs are made by 3D-printing the body,

inserting electrical components that include GPS, and hand painting the 'shell' to mimic the real thing. Once in the field, they can track poachers' trade routes.

Charlie and his crew doubled his goal! They gave enough for over 13 InvestEGGators. Thank you, Charlie and friends. You helped sea turtles and the planet!



Fifteen years ago, most people around here had never seen a baby turtle. **But because of donors like you, many people have now met, fallen in love with, and committed to protect baby sea turtles.** For example, you helped 50 Junior Rangers (and some visitors) visit the rebuilt hatchery this spring and meet their first *tortugüillo*! In small groups, the kids helped baby olive ridley and black turtles enter the sea. You gave them a vision: to respect and protect sea turtles instead of eating the eggs.

You should also know that because of you, the InvestEGGator, which allows law enforcement to track stolen turtle eggs, was just deployed in the Caribbean and will be deployed next year in South America. These developments happened only because of your interest and support. **You shared this technology with more frontline turtle protectors.**

In closing, you did incredible work for wildlife. Your efforts saved 2543 sea turtles in 2020, and 1173 (and counting) this year! In addition, you changed many lives, including mine. I am deeply grateful to you for your long-term impact on wildlife, me, and our communities. **With all my heart, THANK YOU.**

## NEW DONORS, THANK YOU!

*These donors first gave between October 2020 and April 2021. Thank you so much for saving wildlife and joining our journey.*

Adam	Callie	Elizabeth	Jeff	Kevin	Mark	Oscar	Sarah
Akbar	Cameron	Emily	Jeffrey &	Kimberly	Martha	Patty	Scarlett
Alex	Carly & Bob	Enrique	Pamela	Kristin	Mary	Peter &	Scott
Alexis	Carrie	Fredy	Jen	Laura	Matthew	Carolyn	Stacy
Alice	Charlie	Gabriela	Jenna	Lawrence &	Michael	Rachel &	Stephanie
Andrea	Christian	Gideon	Jessica	Laura	Michelle	Brendon	Steve
Andrew	Christine &	Gisela	Joel	Leah & Cody	Mike	Randy	Steven
Ankash	Larry	Glenn	Johan	Lewis	Mimi	Richard	Sue
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Barbara	Damon	Gracia Maria	Karen	Liz	Nathan	Sage	Tim
Brendan	Daniel	Haylee	Kate	Liza	Nicholas	Saleh	Tryne
Brenna	David	Hilary	Kathleen	Luke	Nicholas	Salvador	Tyson
Bryarly	Dean	Jamie	Kelly	María	Noah	Sara	Yanna
Byron	Donald	Jaymee	Kenneth	Mario	Norah & Mike	Sarah Jane &	Zachary
						Chris	



## DID YOU KNOW?

- The black sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas ssp. agassizii*) is a subspecies of green sea turtle. Both black and green turtles are endangered.
- Black turtles live in the Eastern Tropical Pacific, which lies between the Galápagos Islands, Central America, and Mexico.
- Young black turtles are omnivores and adult black turtles are herbivores. The adults' grazing helps seagrass beds and coral reefs stay healthy and balanced.
- Nest poaching and entanglements in fishing gear are their main threats. **Your gifts fought against these threats and saved black turtles.**

## WHAT YOUR PARTNERS DISCOVERED

Your support over the past 16 years helped keep beaches and the ocean plastic free! An event this spring (middle right), hosted by Paso Pacífico and the Center for Aquatic Resources (CIRA) of the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua, Managua (UNAN-Managua), confirmed it when CIRA scientists presented a decade of coastal research to local leaders.

Participants learned that plastic pollution is a concern throughout southwestern Nicaragua. Researchers found 304 pieces of microplastic on average per square meter of sand in San Juan del Sur. However, they found almost none on the beaches of Ostional. By catalyzing countless community-led cleanups, your gifts kept that coast clean. Thank you.





## MORE OF YOUR RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Tears were shed at your accomplishment when you saved an extremely rare macaw from poachers! Just before press time, for the first time in four years, a young cyanoptera macaw took flight from its nest. With fewer than twenty of these birds left in Nicaragua, this macaw chick was a top priority. Even turtle rangers traveled to the nesting site to keep watch. **Thank you.**
- Because of you, the Junior Ranger program enrolled a record number of children. This year, 281 new Junior Rangers (above) are learning about sea turtles, ecology, and environmental leadership.
- The eastern Pacific leatherback turtle is critically endangered. Without a major change in course, it will likely disappear by 2050. You assisted with a multi-day planning workshop with experts across the region to consider emergency measures like rearing juvenile turtles in captivity. Everyone involved vowed to try to save this incredible marine turtle.
- You helped women in Pochote, Nicaragua, monitor for oyster seed to add to their aquaculture farm. Oysters are great alternate protein sources that also keep coastal waters healthy for turtles.
- You supported women turtle rangers as they told the story of your conservation successes to students at the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua, León (UNAN-León). You also helped the turtle ranger team visit Isla Juan Venado, where they learned from another group protecting sea turtles.
- You sparked a citizen science extravaganza! From the Christmas Bird Count to the City Nature Challenge and Global Big Day, you helped people engage with and learn from their natural world. Over the past five months, 112 volunteers participated in recording nature observations. And through your support, those volunteers set records at each event for recording the highest numbers of species.



## NESTING TIME IS NEAR

### Please Help! Save Baby Sea Turtles from Poachers for Just \$30 per Nest

In a couple of months, threatened olive ridley sea turtles will come together to nest en masse off the coast of Nicaragua. Known as the *arribada*, this gathering is the event of the year for turtle poachers. Each mother will lay about 120 eggs, and poachers will attempt to plunder as many nests as possible to sell to bars and restaurants.

**But YOU can stop poachers and save baby sea turtles.**

Your gift today will protect baby sea turtles in their nests near the main *arribada* beach.

Poachers will arrive soon. Without round-the-clock protection, hundreds of nests — tens of thousands of threatened baby sea turtles — will never hatch. Only you can make sure the baby turtles take their first breaths and dive into the waves. *Will you please save a nest of baby sea turtles?*

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## YES! I want to save a nest of baby sea turtles this season!

**Yes! Please** use my gift to save a nest of baby sea turtles, and to support all the conservation work of Paso Pacifico.

### Enclosed is my gift of:

- \$30 to save one nest of baby sea turtles
- \$60 to save two nests of baby sea turtles
- \$120 to save four nests of baby sea turtles
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ to save as many baby sea turtles as I can



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**Give online: [pasopacifico.org/donate](http://pasopacifico.org/donate)**

